

REMARKS

As a preliminary matter, Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for extending the courtesy of a personal interview on April 1, 2004.

Reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

By the foregoing amendments, claims 1, 5-7, 11-13, 17 and 18 have been amended. Thus, claims 1-18 are currently pending in the application and subject to examination.

In the Office Action dated November 21, 2003 claims 1, 7 and 13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,737,485 to Flanagan, et al. Claims 2-3, 6, 8-9, 12, 14-15, and 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Flanagan, et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,627,091 to Fedele. Claims 5, 11 and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Flanagan, et al. and Fedele, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,561,737 to Bowen. Applicants appreciate the indication of allowable subject matter in claims 4, 10 and 16. It is noted that claims 1, 5-7, 11-13, 17 and 18 have been amended. To the extent that the rejections remain applicable to the claims currently pending, Applicants hereby traverse the rejection, as follows.

With regard to claim 1, the Office Action indicates that Flanagan, et al. discloses each and every feature of the claimed invention. Applicants submit, however, that Flanagan, et al. fails to teach and/or suggest each and every limitation of claim 1, as amended. For example, Flanagan, et al. fails to teach or suggest at least the limitations of "[a] speech recognition system mounted on a vehicle having a plurality of seats,

comprising . . . a plurality of voice pickup means for picking up uttered voices, said plurality of voice pickup means being arranged in each neighborhood of said plurality of seats, respectively; . . . and speech recognition means for performing speech recognition based on said speech signal determined by said determination means, wherein said speech recognition means comprises a single unit capable of performing speech recognition for a plurality of voices," as recited in claim 1 as amended. Neither Fedele nor Bowen are cited for or correct these deficiencies in Flanagan, et al.

For at least these reasons, Applicants submit that claim 1 is allowable over the cited prior art. As claim 1 is allowable, Applicants submit that claims 2-6, each of which depends from allowable claim 1, are likewise allowable over the cited prior art.

With regard to claim 7, Applicants submit that claim 7 is allowable over the cited prior art at least because the cited prior art fails to teach and/or suggest each and every limitation of claim 7, as amended. For example, Flanagan, et al. fails to teach or suggest at least the limitations of "[a] speech recognition system mounted on a vehicle having a plurality of seats, comprising . . . a plurality of voice pickup sections for picking up uttered voices said plurality of voice pickup sections being arranged in each neighborhood of said plurality of seats, respectively, . . . and a speech recognizer for performing speech recognition based on said speech signal determined by said determination section, wherein said speech recognizer comprises a single unit capable of performing speech recognition for a plurality of voices," as recited in claim 7, as amended. Neither Fedele nor Bowen are cited for or correct these deficiencies in Flanagan, et al.

For at least these reasons, Applicants submit that claim 7 is allowable over the cited prior art. As claim 7 is allowable, Applicants submit that claims 8-12, each of which depends from allowable claim 7, are likewise allowable over the cited prior art.

With regard to claim 13, Applicants submit that claim 13 is allowable over the cited prior art at least because the cited prior art fails to teach and/or suggest each and every limitation of claim 13, as amended. For example, Flanagan, et al. fails to teach or suggest at least the limitations of "[a] speech recognition method for a speech recognition system having a plurality of voice pickup means for picking up voices, which is mounted on a vehicle having a plurality of seats, comprising . . . a voice pickup step of picking up uttered voices in a vehicle using said plurality of voice pickup means, said plurality of voice pickup means being arranged in each neighborhood of said plurality of seats, respectively," as recited in claim 13, as amended. Neither Fedele nor Bowen are cited for or correct these deficiencies in Flanagan, et al.

For at least these reasons, Applicants submit that claim 13 is allowable over the cited prior art. As claim 13 is allowable, Applicants submit that claims 14-18, each of which depends from allowable claim 13, are likewise allowable over the cited prior art.

For all of the above reasons, it is respectfully submitted that the claims now pending patentability distinguish the present invention from the cited references. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejections and an issuance of a Notice of Allowance are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner determine that any further action is necessary to place this application into better form, the Examiner is encouraged to telephone the undersigned representative at the number listed below.

In the event this paper is not considered to be timely filed, the Applicants hereby petition for an appropriate extension of time. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fee deficiency or credit any overpayment associated with this communication to Deposit Account No. 01-2300 referencing Attorney Docket No. 107156-00019.

Respectfully submitted,



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